

State Council for the Rehabilitation of the Blind
November 7, 2003
Jefferson City, Missouri

ROLL CALL

Present:

Members: James Pelfry, Abby Pfefferkorn, Stan Grimsley, Ruby Polk, Jim Sucharski, John Wunder, Brenda Kennedy, Debbi Head, Josh Douglass, Beverly Kaskadden, Brenda Kennedy, Dr. Lewis Chartock, Russ McCampbell, Tory Brust, Bill Burris

Department and RSB Staff: Mike Fester, Kim Gerlt, Denise Cross, Director of Family Support Division

Guests: Larry Polk (driver), Sheila Wright (Kansas City), Clay Berry (Alpha Pointe)

Absent: Daryel Banks, Rosalie Caldwell (conflict with work schedule), Edna Freeman (knee replacement surgery), Bryan Keller, Lawrence Luck (conflict with work schedule), Mary Kay Savage (conflict with training schedule), April Tooloze

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Stan Grimsley asked if everyone had had time to read the minutes. The minutes were not distributed in advance so time was taken to read them. Mike Fester apologized for the fact that a hard copy was not sent out in advance. They were e-mailed, but some folks didn't receive them or couldn't open them. Others indicated that the spacing and print was difficult to read.

Tory Brust was complimented for the detail in the minutes. She had tried to get them as accurate as possible.

Stan asked the Council if they wanted to clarify what they wanted included in the minutes.

Ruby Polk asked that someone read them out loud for the blind but they are 11 pages long.

Stan said that is something that the Council can decide upon if they want to have abbreviated minutes. In his personal opinion since we only meet once every three months, he thinks the more detail that you have the less you will forget at the next meeting.

Tory said she realized that these were certainly not typical minutes from meetings, but part of it was the response to eliminating the taped transcriptions. We still have the tapes, but in eliminating the transcription of the tape, people still really want a considerable amount of detail.

Jim Pelfrey said it's been three months since the last meeting and it's hard to go through them now. It was suggested that maybe there should be a summary. He also said that it would be nice if we could have them ahead of time.

Josh Douglass asked if the public can receive those tapes and if they want them how do they go about getting them?

Mike didn't know the answer but will find out. Under the sunshine law they must be made available. The point of the tapes is that they are available to anyone. Mike said that we can get them out ahead of time. He asked if we should send another copy with the announcement. It was agreed that it would be helpful to do that.

John Wunder said it would be helpful to have the minutes in less than 30 days.

Stan said that we're fractioned all across the state, we come in here once every three months and leave for three months, and we need something in our hands to keep up. When we get an email we have something to look back on. We have had several changes here in RSB and we didn't know whom to contact. He would like the minutes to be sent out fairly quickly.

James Pelfrey felt that the Braille could be a little cleaner. There were misspellings and letters missing.

Motion to approve the minutes was seconded and approved.

INTRODUCTION OF RSB INTERIM DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Stan asked Mike Fester to talk about himself and the state of RSB. Mike has been with DFS for a year and a half in the capacity of Assistant to the Director. With that, Mike supervises the constituent services units for the Children's Services Division and Family Support Division and is the Legislative Liaison for both Divisions. Mike said, "I deal with most anything that has to do with legislators or complaints coming in to the Division. I have a Master's Degree (MBA) and have worked for 13 years in child welfare programs. When Dr. Davidson resigned two weeks ago, Denise Cross asked me to step in and try to keep the agency on track and to keep things rolling. I agreed to do that because I genuinely have an interest in this particular part of the agency. I think what I bring to the table for you folks is an ability to bring folks together. I think that's something that I can help you out a bunch with. My philosophy on management is to get the people that are providing the services, the resources that they need so that they can do their job. I'll be very frank with you, I don't know a whole lot about RSB, but what I do know is how to manage people and get the most out of folks and get resources for people. With the budget situation the way it is, we're looking at working with universities and colleges to access interns to come in and help us with things like computers. We're also working with the Green Thumb Organization, which is group of older adults who want to work, to get some clerical help in here so we can get the bills paid on a more timely basis, so that

vendors aren't getting upset with us. We were able to hire a couple of temporary part time staff that had worked for us previously and retired, to help us get some of that process caught up. Joyce tells me that we are about 30 days behind now, but that's coming from 90 and 120, so we're getting things caught up.

Mike continued, "I want to apologize for Denise not being here yet; she will be here. She had a conflict, which required her to go meet with the staff in the Attorney General's Office. I will just say that Dr. Davidson resigned effective November 1. I don't know what Denise's idea is as far as filling this position on a full-time basis. I'm sure she'll want to talk to you about that today. All I know is that she wants to do that fairly quickly so that we can bring stability to the staff. I don't know if you all have had the opportunity to meet Kim Gerlt. Kim is my administrative assistant and will be working with this Council. We know how each other works so I don't think that will be a very hard transition. I want to apologize to you for the minutes not getting out in a timely basis but please understand that we are both new to this. Kim had never done one of these meeting and so we are relying on information from people that have retired and are not readily accessible. I think you will be pleased with the professionalism that Kim will bring to the table."

James Pelfrey stated that he liked the binder with the minutes. It was a nice touch already that we don't have to hand out print copies during the meeting so I commend you for that.

Stan said that we'll learn more, I'm assuming, then when Denise comes. Mike said that she has all kinds of things to talk about.

Stan said that he is a great believer in continuity. "We just haven't had that during the last couple of years. We didn't know who was our liaison, so I think that if we could get help with the work that we do to advocate for low vision and blind as a Council, that would help."

John Wunder stated, "When we got Dr. Davidson it was kind of a nice breath of fresh air that came in, that we finally had somebody that wanted to work with the Council. We hope that you are that way."

Mike said that he was absolutely that way and thinks that you will find that out very quickly. "I hope to over the next month or two to meet with each of you individually on your turf to find out more about you and what you expect out of the Council and what you want the Council to do and what your feelings are and to move forward with that.

Stan said, "John pretty well talked for all of the Council, and we have new members here, and I know that you're just getting your feet on the ground, but you have to realize that it's a two-way street and we have no control. We essentially serve in an advisory capacity and most of us, well John has some control, but we have to remember that. We are here in an advisory capacity, but then on the other hand what he was saying, and I got this when I first came on the Council a year and a half ago, that we were just meeting over here and they were telling us what we could and couldn't do and we were arguing

about that and it had nothing to do with advocating for the blind. Let's talk about something that we're doing rather than the organizational structure. I think if you keep that in mind and we keep in mind that you people run the agency and we just advise, that's our job."

James Pelfrey said, "It's a level of frustration and again, your sincerity and commitment is apparent. But when I read that Dr. Davidson resigned, it took the wind out of the sail. Maybe with the infusion of some new people it will help us because you guys, the role of the new folks is to give us some energy and to be enthused about it and have some enthusiasm so that the rest of us will get energized from you all.

Stan reminded the Council that the only reason we are here is to advocate for the low vision and the blind.

ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON

Stan said that since John Ford had resigned, he wondered how much longer his term as chair was and was this the date when the election for chair really occurred?

Mike Fester said that his term was up from what he understood. Tory confirmed that. He was elected as chair two meeting ago for another year. He would have been chair until May. Mike asked if that would have been pending reappointment. Council members responded, yes. Mike said that he thought his three-year term ended, and he was not reappointed. Stan asked if that meant that they reelected someone who would not be reappointed then. April Toolooze filled John Ford's position. Stan asked about the other officers? Mike said that Chris Brown from the Governor's Office explained to him that at this point the only position that we have to fill is the chair unless the new chair is in one of the other offices and then you have to fill that position.

Stan called for nominations for chair for a one-year term.

Jim Sucharski said that it would be very helpful to him as a new person, and perhaps to some of the other new people if we went around the table, even though we did, with a different brand of introduction, that we go around the table and perhaps hear a little bit about who each person is and what they do. He said that a lot of the new people don't know whom we're voting for or what we're voting for.

James Pelfrey, I'm from Cape Girardeau, Missouri. My seeing eye dog is Opal. My background is in higher education administration. I worked at Southeast Missouri State University and that's what I am currently looking to do in terms of employment. I have been on the Council now for three years and did serve on the Blind Literacy Task Force as well. So what I try to bring to the Council is hopefully, in my view, some sort of twofold, one being a consumer with a disability and secondly having some administrative background, working at a University and having that sense as well.

Tory Brust, I am the Director of the Education and Rehabilitation Department at Alpha Pointe Association for the Blind in Kansas City, Missouri. I have been working in this field since 1979. This is my last year of a second three-year term. I'm here representing the community rehabilitation program.

Lew Chartock, I'm filling the Missouri Training and Employment Council (MTEC) seat on this board. I am fairly new here. I am also Vice-Chair of the Simon Foundation which is a fairly large foundation in St. Louis. I'm on the national CARF board, Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities. In addition to those things I am also the president of MERS, MO Goodwill in St. Louis.

Kim Gerlt, I took Mary Lou's position. I'm just here to help and put everything together.

Jim Sucharski, I'm new to the Council. I was appointed last month by the Governor. I am currently serving as Superintendent for the Missouri School for Blind. I had a three-decade career in public school. For 27 of those years, I was a school administrator and the last two years I've been, that's incorrect, for a number of years, but for the last two years I have been teaching graduate and undergraduate courses for two different universities and serving as financial consultant for school districts through out the State of Missouri. I also serve as the liaison for Southeast Missouri State University for the Charter School Project that they host in St. Louis. I also serve on the Blind Student Task Force Board also. I am looking forward to working with this Council.

Ruby Polk, I've been on the Council approximately three years now. I am from Kansas City, Missouri and have a small business there called Braille Skills Training of Kansas City. I am a product of this agency. I came through Rehab Services for the Blind and became employed through my training. I'm a Braille advocate. My mission and a passion of mine is to make sure that every blind person is literate.

Beverly Kaskadden, I live in Lake Saint Louis, Missouri. I have been blind for 14 years and I was a client of Rehab Services and I have learned a lot and I want to pass that on to others. I have been active with the Missouri Council for Blind for 10 years and love everything I do. It's a mission of mine to learn more and pass it on.

Debbi Head, My job title is Inclusion Facilitator. I am specifically working with early childhood kids in the Pattonville, Kirkwood and Rockwood School Districts. My inclusion facilitation is for kids who are low vision/blind, physically impaired, and medically fragile. I do a lot of assistive technology accommodations and augmentative communication evaluations and also work side by side with the speech therapist. In the three districts we have early childhood special education programs where half of our classroom is typically developing children and the other half are kids with disabilities. We have wonderful role models for our kids to pattern after and I see tremendous improvement with my students. It has been a really good job fit because my big advocacy is that we are all one community, we all grow up together and we all need to be in school together. So inclusion is really my stand. Prior to this job I was the teacher of visually impaired for the Wentzville School District, ages 3 to 21, so that's when I came

on the Council. I was doing school age and covered the entire Wentzville district. Right now my focus is early childhood and I am also a consumer support provider for the ETC Program and have several adult clients to keep my hand in the adult field and that's a job I enjoy very much. I am the current Chair-Elect for the HB 401 Blind Student Task Force and will be taking over as chair in December of next year. Stan Grimsley noted that Debbi had received the 2002 Educator of the Blind Award from the National Federation of the Blind.

John Wunder, I am the mayor of Cleveland, Missouri. My only chance to be famous is that I'm the father of Gary Lee Wunder who is president of the National Federation of the Blind. As far as the programs, there are so many people who know so much more about them, that I'm fairly illiterate after two years on the Council. I run a construction business in Kansas City area.

Bill Burris, I am from West Plains, Missouri. I am a disabled veteran belonging to several veterans' organizations. I am also a member of the Missouri Council for the Blind and am serving as treasurer of that group for a second term. I belong to a lot of different organizations. I serve on different boards for the state such as, Older Blind Services, State Library Board, and the Wolfner Library, and I served on several Governor's Councils and Secretary of State's boards in the past. Right now I am very busy with the work of the Missouri Council for the Blind. I am also president of Ozark Independent Living Center in West Plains and have been since it was initiated. I want to ask a question about the chair, do they have to be visually impaired in some way? Council members responded, no.

Joshua Douglas, I'm an attorney with Missouri Protection and Advocacy Services, Inc., and I am the appointed Client Assistance Program Representative to the Council. Through the Client Assistance Program we assist clients of RSB with any disputes they might have arising in their case with RSB. Josh was asked where he was located and he responded that he is located in Jefferson City.

Russ McCampbell, I am from Columbia, Missouri and formally with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. I was the Assistant Commissioner for Vocational and Adult Education. I had all of the adult education programs in the state under that jurisdiction and all vocational education/work force training programs, along with those in cooperation with the Division of Family Services. Prior to that I was the Administrative Assistant to the Commissioner of Education and prior to that I worked for Dr. Sucharski at Perryville, Missouri. My relationship here is that during my last year as Assistant Commissioner, I lost my eyesight due to bilateral detached retinas. We were able to laser the retinas back and I am getting along very well. I have a strong desire to make sure we have services for the blind.

Brenda Kennedy, I was appointed to this Council yesterday afternoon, so this is very new for me. I'm a Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in the Mid-Mo office here and I started work in 1993, so I have been here ever since that point. I was one of these people who was hired on before getting a master's degree although my undergraduate

work was in Rehabilitation Counseling at the University of Missouri Columbia. I did finish my master's degree in December from Lincoln University through the whole RCEP and Continuing Education program for counselors. I was really happy to get it done. My mother was a client of the Rehabilitation Services for the Blind agency. My mother was born blind, she's a guide dog user. She is working with the Social Security Administration in Kansas City. She actually started working with that agency after I started working with the rehab agency. It was interesting to see her go through the consumer side of it as I was learning the services side.

Abby Pfefferkorn, I'm a junior at Southeast Missouri State University, I live in Sikeston, and I'm getting my degree in special education. I'll be certified to do cross categoricals as well as teach the visually impaired.

Stan Grimsley, I'm a counselor and all around good guy from Adrian, Missouri, with 34 years as a high school counselor. The last fifteen years of my career I worked closely with the State Department of Education. I've been on the Advisory Council for Guidance. I helped write the Missouri Comprehensive School Guidance Program and then in turn I worked with Dr. Norm Gysbers as he brainstormed with a bunch of us and we took it in to thirty-eight different states and helped them set it up, including the Pacific Rim and Hawaii and got some nice travel out of all that. We had a very gracious board so I have been very involved with education through the years and the legislative part of it. I became involved with the Council through Senator Caskey, who grew up in my area. I am very business centered and still involved with the BC National Bank, a seven bank complex in Western Missouri, which my grandfather helped originate and my brother and I have a lot of land and cattle and horse that I thought I could enjoy in retirement after I retired six years ago. I retired at a very tender age of thirty-two. Anyway, I've been an entertainer all my life and that's how I got to know the Carnahan's and the Roger Wilson's and the Becky Cook's because I was always with my band when we did rallies around the state. I've been with 32 Nashville stars as the opening act over the years, Loretta Lynn, Conway Twitty, and George Jones, all of them. So I have quite a varied life and then I got the call for this Council a couple years ago and I'm getting a new education and as we were talking about the chairmanship I can do this here. I'm still on several educational advisory committees, but the knowledge here, if you've got any smarts at all to know anything, I know how little I know about this situation, I'm learning. I don't know why I got put in this position last year. I can run the meetings but I feel there are so many more that know more about the background of this organization. So I just want you to know where I'm coming from. I certainly have the greatest respect in the world for Senator Caskey and this Council, because he was instrumental in most everything that has been passed on the state level, not only in education but for the blind and vocational education. So that's why I'm sitting here.

Stan asked if there was anything else anyone would like to add?

Debbi Head asked if there was anyone who would like to volunteer and give a statement as to while they would be a good chairperson. "I would prefer someone to volunteer and say hey I would really like to take on the role of chairperson and this is why. In a

classroom they teach you that when your teaching a class and you ask a question, when everybody looks down and looks away they are not going to answer your question."

James Pelfrey asked that he not be considered because he was in the middle of a job search and didn't know where he would end up.

Ruby said that she thinks that elections were a few months ago, and that Stan accepted the vice chair at that time and the vice chair's responsibility is to take the position of chair.

Stan asked if she remembered how he accepted the position of vice chair? "I went to get coffee and I was put in as chair and flatly refused and then I come back and they said you're going to take vice and I said I'll run the meeting when the chair's not here. I guaranteed you at that time. I'll do my best. When I come on a committee and a council, if you want me to run the darn thing from up here I'll do it. And I'll do it to the best of my ability.

Debbi said "Dr. Chartock made a wonderful point because as we went around the room, I had no idea and I have served on this Council for two and a half years, the wealth of information of people from higher education and the administrative and higher education that are represented in this room. Higher education and administration and the rehab area, we are well represented by numerous people in this room that have a very strong working knowledge of that population. That is the population that is more served by Rehab Services for the Blind, rather than a younger population. So, I'm kind of looking around looking at these people that have either higher education backgrounds or administration backgrounds, voc rehab backgrounds and you know looking at you guys going okay, you've got the knowledge and the background to take over as chairperson and have a working knowledge of what Rehab Services for the Blind is all about.

Ruby said, "We need someone who cares and has a heart to do it. Qualifications are one thing but do you have a heart and are you going to care about the services consumers are going to be getting. This is another component that needs to be looked at as well. It's kind of like when Tory went for secretary and we said your qualified to do this job, but do you have desire. You have to have those kind of things in there too.

Lew Chartock said that something Bill said struck a note with him too. "Even though it's not part of the bylaws, there is an interesting issue as to whether somebody has had actual experience with blindness and or disabilities. I have to take that comment seriously."

Bill said, "I do too. This is a blind organization and I feel serious that we ought to have someone with a visual impairment as a chair and that's just my opinion.

Beverly Kaskadden asked, "What are the responsibilities of chair? Does anyone have the bylaws?

Ruby asked Sheila Wright if she could help. Sheila Wright said, "When she was chair of course she ran the meetings and she helped plan the agenda with director of the agency. I periodically wrote letters in between meetings that I was directed to write by the Council. I supervised the staff liaison person to some degree. A previous chair helped hire that person and do the individual appraisal each year. I called special meetings or conference calls if there was some issue that came up and needed to be dealt with directly."

Stan asked if the chairman was president of all sub committees?

Debbi, said, "We've got the bylaws out and they say the duties of the chairperson shall be to call all special meetings, send a notice of all regular or special meetings, and preside at all council meetings and sit as ex-officio member of all subcommittee appointed by him or her. The chairperson should have the right to create any and all subcommittees deemed necessary or appropriate by the Council. I think Sheila did a great job summarizing. Another responsibility that needs to be added, simply because I'm on the annual report committee, is statement in the annual report from the chair person, that summarizes what the Council has done during the course of the year of the annual report."

Lew Chartock said, "I just want to say, that as we went around the room, with the exception of me, there wasn't one person who I wouldn't be pleased to have the chair of this organization. Russ you are probably going to hate me for this, but I've never seen you before in my life but I was particularly impressed by your background and the fact that you walk in both worlds. I would like to nominate you if nominations are open."

Jim Sucharski seconded.

Russ said that he would be please to work with the Council but his appointment ran out in 2002, so right now he is serving in the same position as the previous chair person.

Stan asked if there was any discussion or more nominations.

Ruby nominated Stan Grimsley.

Stan said he didn't think there was a problem with that, if Russ would like this position he would continue to serve as he has been serving.

Ruby said that she put a nomination on the floor and asked for a second.

John seconded the nomination of Stan.

Russ said that the Council is really talking about the need for two major officers, that of the chair and vice chair. "Quite frankly I think it's important to show stability here. Stan, was elected as vice chair and we've had a change in the position of chair. I think it would be important to follow that and have Stan move on up to chair. I think we are facing some very critical issues as we move into the next legislative session. We have a

realignment in the Department of Social Services. We have many, many budget issues. I would like to have the Council show strong cohesiveness. We lost one chair because his appointment was out. I would like to see some stability so that we can show that Stan's been on here before, that someone else is the vice chair, and that we show a strong influence to our clients and individuals who have blindness.

Jim Sucharski said, "I think the two of you would do well, and again, I think either one would do well, but I like Russ, with his expertise and with Stan's willingness to jump in and step in that you guys would be generally such a good team and you would be able to help. I feel very comfortable with the direction of the Council. Seeing it in that way and understanding that Stan could step in and that, I just think that I've known Russ from the Blind Task Force and the Council here and the expertise that he could bring. When I look at it I almost think of it as my own mind and maybe that presumptuous, I kind of think almost a chair, co-chair. I just see the two of you working really well together.

Stan asked if there were any more nominations or discussion. There was none.

The question was asked about how to vote. The By-laws stated that it has to be a secret ballot.

Stan asked if we could have someone pass out ballots. Mike Fester handed out ballots and counted them and announced the results. Ten votes for Russ, three votes for Stan.

Stan commented that the Council had made a very good decision.

Lew asked if the Council need to affirm Stan the vice-chair and whether the Council was going to change the other officers? Council members responded, no, just the president.

Russ McCampbell thanked everyone for the vote of confidence. "I will try to do my best, as you know I have been kind of vocal in the past on some of our budget issues and also maybe on seeing where we can go with some public forums, so those are going to be issues that we are going to go down the road. Also you know that I'm not afraid to call Denise, or go right on up the ladder either. With that, I would like to move forward on the agenda and I believe that we have the Director's report, but Mike indicated that we are going to skip that and go to the Deputy Director's report. Denise will be here around 11:30 a.m." Russ added that he also had worked with Denise on the Missouri Training and Employment Council and also on a number of issues that involved Family Services and the Adult Basic Education, GED program. .

DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mike Fester, RSB

Mike Fester said that he just wanted to tell a little bit about what was going and what's happened in the last few weeks with regard to RSB. First RSB's physical placement is moving from the Knipp Building to the Howerton Building. "With the division split, and Children's Services not being a part of us anymore, we decided that the best way to make

the new organization work, and when I say new organization, it includes Income Maintenance, Child Support Enforcement and RSB, would be to move everybody into the same building so that we can be with each other and support each other. That's going to take effect, we're going to begin moving tentatively the first week in December. It may cause a little bit of complication in getting a hold of us for a day or two. There are a couple of days that where we're going to kind of be displaced. None of the phone numbers will change, everybody's line will be the same and that will transfer to the new building. Jeremy tells me we will have no computer down time, that switch will be made over a weekend, the server moved and that sort of thing. So we're kind of looking forward to it. The new address is 615 Howerton Court. I am personally very excited about that because in the year and a half that I've been with the Division, quite frankly, I have felt that RSB has taken a back seat to, well I think everything has taken a back seat to Children's Services. I spent 90% of my time working with Children's Services issues. With that being split out I think this is an opportunity for RSB to move more to the forefront. I think this is a wonderful opportunity for the issues that RSB deals with to be brought to the forefront and be more prominent in, not only the Division level, but also the Department level."

Mike stated that no other change, effective November 17, will occur when Kevin Faust will be full time in a fiscal role similar to that of Janet Renken in before her retirement. "The first task that we had was to get out federal reports that were due last week. We weren't able to make the deadlines, but they have been submitted and I am meeting with the Federal folks in 2 weeks to attempt to smooth things over. We are also switching to a newer, more friendly database that will make this process much easier in the future"

Mike was asked about the new data system, and if there was going to be one employee who had control over the whole data system. Mike responded, "No, absolutely not. We are going to cross train on the system."

Mike stated that he has been meeting with staff around the state to get their input on how things are going, how things have been and what we can do differently. "There is a real split among the staff. My number one task is to address that."

Lew asked if there are any particular themes that have emerged? Mike responded that the theme is that it's very much a personality thing and it seems that it's split into two groups. Lew asked if it was anything that required some sort of policy? Mike said no, not at this point.

Mike continued to say that one of the things the staff is telling him is that they want, at the local level, to be able to have some decision making ability. Steve Rolling, the Department Director, wants to push some decision items down to the local level. "It's going to happen, it's going to be a process and Denise and I are going to work through that and figure out how to implement it and then go from there."

Stan said, "People in the local situations know a lot more about it then the people here."

Council members noted that was why we have managers out in the offices. Mike responded that that was correct and that we have the district supervisors to supervise the staff.

A question was raised as to how we are doing with the resignations in the field and how we are doing in getting those positions filled. Mike said the St. Louis North District Supervisor's position was approved to be filled. "The letters went out yesterday to those folks who had applied to say if they are still interested to call and we'll set up appointments. We're going to give them 10 or 14 days to reply and after that we're going to immediately set up appointments. Denise would like for myself, Bill Hagood and Mark Laird to sit in on those interviews and then she would also like someone from the outside involved in the interviews. We haven't gone into any detail as to the qualifications for the outside representative, but it should be someone not affiliated or not an employee to get some input, possibly a consumer, or something of that nature. We have Bill Cobb in Southeast Missouri serving on an interim basis. I hope to be able to remove the interim as quickly as possible. The interim was placed there just as a safety net to see how Bill did and that sort of thing and I think he's done a good job. I think it's time to move forward with that pending approval through the critical hire process. I have gotten tentative approval to fill 2 positions for Rehab Teachers in the field. I am waiting for one more. We have gotten approval from Budget and Finance to fill the position, now we have to go to our own shop and make sure the money is there. I'm supposed to have that back by the end of the day today and if that's the case we will be filling those immediately. I believe, if I'm saying this right, one is in the Sikeston office, where they are down to one. So, we'll be able to fill that immediately and I hope today to call Bill and tell him to fill that position. I'm not sure where the other position would be filled.

Stan asked that since Mike was looking for outside people to be on that screening board if that is where the Council could come in with a representative from that area. It would help us feel involved. Debbi Head said, "I don't know whether it would be up to chair, but if it does work out, I would be more than willing to serve as the person who is in St. Louis North area, I am very close to the office." Stan said that would involve the Council.

A question was asked regarding the number of new rehab teachers, and if that number would depend on how many miles they would have to cover or how many counties. Mike said that they were allocated based on both miles and on client load/case load. Mike thought there were two in each office at this point.

Ruby asked if the two in Kansas City were covering 22 counties. Mike said that was correct. She then asked if another two were covering 14 counties. Debbie Head said that the populations of the counties in Kansas City were not that comparative to other areas like the Sikeston area where the teachers have to go further miles. Mike indicated that there was a lot of traveling in some areas. He said he would let Brenda speak to that because she does it everyday.

Brenda said, "I'm a counselor not a teacher but I know that Kansas City has a lot of rural territory too in some of their counties. They go clear to the Iowa boarder. They have a lot of rural territory too, not just the cities. We usually divide up our caseloads. How we handle it in the Mid-Mo office is that we've got one or two counties that are shared counties and the other ones are split up by territory so that when a caseload starts getting to big or to many referrals in Kirksville, we can balance it out by giving the Columbia people the case. I'm not sure that all offices do it that way but that's how we try and split it up and keep it even. I know our rehab teachers are carrying about 100 cases right now. When you're teaching Braille that's really a lot. You are just applying band-aids. They only can only get to everyone once every six to eight weeks and that's tough."

Debbie said she had a client that she did a technology evaluation on and he's getting the Braille lesson one time a month. She said that "He's at grade one and he's been at grade one for quite a while and we would like to proceed in his Braille advancement but he's getting one lesson a month. You know your not going to make a lot of progress in Braille if your getting one lesson of Braille a month. You are just not going to progress with that, you need to move on and you need to practice." Debbie indicated that he's out of the St. Louis- North office.

Lew asked if there were any technological advances in the learning of Braille that's computerized or a way that somebody can work differently than with a teacher sitting right there with them.

Debbie said that a teacher is the best. "You really need a person, a human being. It just makes the comprehension easier."

Ruby stated that people are reading Braille by sight now but usually those are the teachers instead of the actual users. They can understand the concept and read it by sight but "hands on readers" is the best way.

Debbie said that this is where you really get into the literacy issue that Ruby talked about. For a person to be literate they need to be taught by another person so they become literate and knowledgeable in Braille just like a child in a school district is best taught how to read print by a teacher.

Lew said that he really appreciated the information and that he hoped that nobody minds the questions, because the learning curve for some of members is high.

It was stated that there are people who are contracted that can get out in the areas and they are not getting the jobs to go to these people who need it. Stan asked if this was an additional problem in rural areas where we have to travel so much or is this caused by something else. He indicated that maybe the Council could address this. "I am from a rural area south of Kansas City and since we were involved when they started career one stops, I've stopped in at several of the rural one-stops and they are not providing anything hardly at all for the low vision person and that's been mandated from the legislature and federal government. I can go to Kansas City and St. Louis and places like that and I can

find everything is provided. So, it's more or less, in the rural places where I have walked in and asked what would they do if a low vision person walked in and they said we'd just assign somebody to read everything for them."

Mike said that he doesn't think it's a rural problem, he thinks it's a state wide problem. The caseloads are such that there is just not enough time to see people more. And there's not enough dollars to contract to have the services provided and that's where we can work together.

Russ said he thinks that's where this Council has got to be. "We have seen, in the last three years, strong public comments or strong press comments about case loads for our Family Services assistance. If you are over in the capitol during the legislative session you see all of the individuals who are associated with Independent Living Councils in the halls and so forth. We really don't see the blind community represented in the halls visiting and so forth, making the awareness that the services out in the field are not being provided. You come back to Jim Moody, who was the former director of Administration, Budget and Planning, who is saying you get what you pay for. That's where I think this Council needs to move forward to give assistance to Mike and Denise and to give assistance on up through the chain of command to make sure that our legislative folks know that we've got to begin to pay for some of these services. Ruby is so correct that in certain areas we have good services, but the Kansas City office goes clear up to the Iowa border. We just don't have the dollars to provide those services and that's where we as a Council need to come back and be of assistance to Mike and Denise."

Mike indicated that another position that is on the critical hire list is a mobility specialist in Kansas City. Mike said, "We don't have one and that's not acceptable. We had a retirement and the other position was vacant because of budget constraints. So now there is no one in Kansas City. It all comes down to money."

Stan said he thought there was funding for this position. Mike indicated that there was a hiring freeze statewide. Mike said, "What we have to do is submit what's called critical hire requests."

Lew asked about privatizing and outsourcing some of the positions. Mike said that is a possibility, but that there are limits based on federal match dollars.

Russ said that part of the problem is that it's contracted services money but it has to be through contracts that are approved by the Office of Administration. If there are no contracts out there then the agency must issue a Request For Proposals and there is a certain time line of so many days that it's out there, then it comes back.

Mike expanded on that point by indicating that he and Bill Hagood had just met with the contract unit people for the Division and he had asked them to open the contract back up and put out an RFP. Mike said, "It won't change anything for people who are currently contracted, but I've been hearing around the state that there is a need for services that we are not contracted with, so they are going to open that back up and we're going to put it

out as an RFP, not only for just individual services but it would include services that facilities like Alpha Pointe provide to consumers." Mike was asked if this process is called subcontracting. Mike indicated that it was not. He said, "They are contract amendments that you have to go through in order to cut the checks from the State to pay for those services and they have to be associated and amendments to certain contracts or new RFP's."

Lew said that Mike was right that no matter how long it takes, you've got to get started somewhere so you should put that thing into place and if you don't need it don't use it. Debbi said that it's better to have them out there and at least approved. Mike said it's better to have them approved and have a vendor number so that if we need to use it we can, rather than having to go through the process each time.

Debbi said her concern is that a Mobility Specialist isn't just available on every street corner. She said, "If we think that finding teachers certified in vision and Braille is difficult; try finding an O & M instructor."

Ruby Polk said that one can do a nation wide search on list serve and that specialists are out there. Mike said that for that particular position in Kansas City, "We do have someone qualified to do it, that is in another position and would like to transfer into that position, but before I'm going to transfer anybody I want to make sure that we can fill the position that they came out of." Mike said that's why we need to be doing RFPs now, so that when we do get approval we have names and we have resources to go to provide the services.

Russ said that he didn't want the Council to get into any kind of administrative decisions, but that it might be good to have a list of the open positions, a list of the contracts that RSB has that generally describe what kind of services are out there, and then finally where there are really shortages of services, such as those that Debbie was talking about. Russ said, "I think that's going to be important for us as a Council, and each one of us represent constituencies out in the field area, so that we can help you locate somebody who can provide services, but more importantly make that awareness that we really need to promote individuals in these areas.

Jim Sucharski asked if we would be seeing downsizing, combining, and people being pooled together for quite a while. Mike said that there is not going to be any positions eliminated, but the issue is just having the ability to fill (fund) the ones that are open. . John Wunnder said the money won't be there; the state is going to have problems and restrictions. Mike said that he didn't know how much the Council kept up with the state budget but if we thought this year was bad, wait until next year. There was eight hundred million dollars of one time money used to get to where we are this year; that money is not available next year. Lew said that the State is facing a billion dollar short fall depending on who you listen to. Mike said that the positive thing about RSB is the amount of federal funding that's there, the match money. "That's a tool that we need to use when talking to our legislators. This isn't going to cost them a fortune." Lew asked if that was an 80/20 federal/state match. "The State hasn't yet decided that we have to

give up any free dollars by not putting theirs up to, especially since some of the potential match is 'in-kind' and not cold cash."

Russ told Mike that the Council has had presentations regarding the services from Colorado, the Dakotas, and so forth, and asked how RSB is doing in that area? Mike said that he could not answer that question right now. "I know Bill has spoken with me just a little about some problems that we had with some contracts and he's working with those people on it but I don't have any details about it at all. I do know he thinks that we're getting problems solved and worked out. The little thing that I read on one school in particular concerns me and I'm not sure that we are and I think it's going to require an extensive look at things. One of the things that I would like to look at, and Denise and I talked about just a little bit last night, is that many of our clients are going out of state for these services, which we have to allow because they need the services and they have the ability to choose those services. I want to look into making cooperative agreements with the state RSB that they are in to do the supervision of the facilities in their state. We're how many miles away from Colorado? We can't see that things are being improved on a daily basis, we can talk on the telephone and get written reports but if we would have a cooperative agreement with the state RSB in Colorado they could go out and tell us what's going on. That's something that we're looking into doing with the states where we have contracts or with the facilities that we contract out of state".

Josh Douglass suggested that RSB might want to contact the Protection and Advocacy Service agencies in those states as well. He said, "You'll get the other side of the story. They are privy to complaints and rumors that you won't hear otherwise." Mike asked if that was a list that Josh could make available. Josh said, "If you can get me a list of the states you need, I'll get you the contact names and the phone numbers."

Lew said that Voc Rehab has now gone to an order of selection. "As a part of that order of selection, they have started to fool with the rights to pick and choose what higher education institution somebody wants to attend. We provide the information about the resources that are available to them and then they make the decision where they receive that service."

Lew asked what are we doing to entice folks to come to Missouri and work and stay in Missouri and to work with our universities to train people. He said that in working with the Blind Student Task Force on blind skills specialist, we couldn't even fill the position in out-state Missouri. Lew asked, "When people aren't there because there are no applicants, what are we doing to get them here?" Mike said that he thinks that's a challenge that we have. "I think in the past we've probably haven't done much of anything other than advertise in the newspaper but the way I understand it, Missouri would be a very attractive place to work in the field. Our salaries, while not the highest, are kind of in the median. The State has a very good benefit package. What I hope to be able to do is put something together, some sort of marketing tool that we can use for those positions that highlight all of the things that are special that we can do. What I want to be able to include in is something that says that our caseloads meet certain numbers or are at levels that are workable, but that's not the case right now."

Russ said that's why he was asking about a list of the open positions and contracts and then an identification of those areas where we really have a shortage of providers. "I think Lew is just right on target that maybe as you and the staff begin to look at some marketing tools that will attract individuals to the state we also look at ways that we can provide training in those areas. That's what we're experiencing with the blind specialists on the Blind Student Task Force. So if we could have that maybe we could see the Council working with you on that area."

Tory said that's what she wanted to mention. She thinks one of the main keys to getting qualified staff in the state and keeping people in the state is to have university programs for training. It's just critical and we need to be offering them at UMSL, MU, and UMKC.

Debbi said that currently the only vision program, the only thing Missouri offers for vision, is certification through Southwest Missouri State University. Jim Sucharski also mentioned that classes are also being offered through distance education at the Missouri School for the Blind.

Debbie stated that "The HB 401 Blind Student Task Force has been working closely with DESE on teacher certification and specifically in visually impaired. Part of the problem is for a teacher to move in from a state that has a vision certification, many hoops have to be jumped. It's been a very difficult experience in the state of Missouri. We are making progress. We are currently in the process of developing a Praxis provision so that a teacher could transfer into the state, take the vision Praxis and then teach in Missouri. We don't have that Praxis in place yet though. The only way a person's certification is getting evaluated in DESE is if the superintendent of the school calls and says I need you to look at this person's certification because I would like to hire them. It has to come from the superintendent of the school in order to get done in any kind of timely fashion. They have also got a working agreement with the SMSU program that if the people take any of their certification courses through SMSU, then SMSU can look through their past records and give DESE an opinion. That's cut down some of the wait time."

Russ said that we've got to have some data first of all to show there's a need out there and where the shortage is. Then we can come back with a lot of the other pieces to the strategy.

Debbi said that she had looked at the 2002-2003 DESE count just last week; it showed just over 500 students identified as blind or visually impaired. Debbie said that those of us who are on the HB 401 Task Force know that that number is indeed well over 1000. Debbie said that one of the things the task force has done is to create 9 vision specialist regions. This creates 9 low vision specialists positions. We have financially been able to fill 2 of those positions. One is in Springfield the other is in Sikeston. Mike asked if that made them an unfunded mandate. Debbie said yes, we got the positions but we didn't get any money".

Ruby said it is her understanding that RSB has children specialists in different areas so once they get that referral they refer back to the school district and they are suppose to support financially any equipment or services that the child needs right?

Debbie responded that the district is responsible for providing any equipment and Braille instruction and accommodations while the child is between 3 and 21. That is the school district's responsibility not RSB.

Russ asked Tory to serve as chair of an ad ho committee group to work on this issue. He also told Mike that the committee would looked forward in getting the information on services, providers and shortages so that together we maybe we could push the envelope further. Russ stated that he would like to get that moving fairly soon, so that at least we can begin to do the schooling process with the people over on the hill as well as our consumers around the state.

Stan asked as the advisory council how much can we do individually on the Hill. Stan said, "I've been told in the educational circle to stay out of that office. Stay out of that Senators office."

Debbie said that's a real good question. Everyone agreed that the message being sent should be consistent. Debbie said the next area of concern is that Senator Caskey is in his last year of a two year term, due to term limits. "We all know how wonderful he has supported pretty much any and all of our needs. He is in his last year to two years. People are wondering who will champion our cause after he is gone.

Russ said that this is strictly his thinking but he believes in a strong chain of command here too. The information on services, providers, and shortages and the work of the ad hoc committee would come back to the Council so that we can then provide input to Mike and Denise. We are not necessarily over here on the side being a "rebel rousing group. Russ added that the main thing here is that we can provide some information from the field back to Mike and Denise.

Russ asked Mike if Denise was going to walk through some of the handouts that were provided at the meeting? Mike said yes and that she would be arriving soon.

Lew said it wouldn't hurt to get a fact sheet from the ad hoc committee on the main messages so that everyone has the same message as to what we want to get out. Russ said that we have had several new people appointed to the Council and that we will want to get members all back up to speed and to see the need that exists out there. Russ said, "I think that's one thing that we as a Council have been grasping for the last two or three years, what are some issues that we could push the envelope on and approve here and then make a difference."

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Denise Cross, Director of the Family Support Division

Russ introduced Denise Cross to the Council. "Denise has changed titles and I'll let her talk to you a little bit about that. We also have several pieces of paper in front of us regarding appropriations.

Russ asked the Council members to go around the room and introduce themselves to Denise.

Denise thanked everyone and said that she wanted to apologize for not being present at the start of the meeting. "As Russ said, as of August 28, 2003, I became the Director of the Family Support Division which now includes Child Support functions and all of the programs that we had under Income Maintenance and Rehab Services for the Blind. I no longer have responsibility for Children Services/Child Protection Services. This all happened, as we've talked about in the past, through an executive order by the Governor and was effective August 28. We've been working try to organize ourselves in this new structure, part of that has been my asking Mike to act as Interim Director for Rehab Services for the Blind, due to the resignation of Dr. Betty Davidson. I also believe in the structure, Rehab Services will really stay pretty much how it has been with the Deputy Director, and Mike is interim right now over that program area. We are trying to bring some other supports in from other parts of the agency because we've got some gaps due to retirements, around reporting and budgeting and other agency supports. We've got folks that are operating on the Income Maintenance and Children Service side doing budget and federal reporting that are now helping out here in Rehab Services so that we can bring all of those pieces together under the Family Support Directorship. With a little closer coordination and a little better reporting I hope we'll have more timely reporting and get to a point where we can go out and get a better sense of trends on how we're doing and determine if we are meeting our goals. Sometimes in the face of budget challenges you have some opportunities to really improve the way that you are doing business and those are things that we are looking at.

Denise continued, "We've been busy trying to organize ourselves internally, at the same time we have been working on budget development for FY 05. I will talk a little bit about the sheets I've handed out to you. Those mostly are going to capture the conversation that Brian Kincade had with you all a couple meetings ago. That's the follow up to that discussion. We can go through them to the extent that I can. If we get really detailed I might have to get back to you. We've also been working with budget and finance and with the governor's office and with OA on our 2005 budget request. I will tell you that it's pretty flat except for any mandatory increases, like the blind pension grant and any caseload increases that we may have. There is no request for staff or operating cost, so those will stay level and we'll just continue to try to manage. The Governor did impose a statewide hiring freeze July 1 and we are still under that freeze, so as we have vacancies we put together a request to fill those vacancies with justification. Hopefully we can wrap that up within the next few days and get those positions filled. We really are under a little slower process then we've had in the past, but that's just the time that we are in. We came into the budget this fiscal year with significantly reduced administrative budgets across the Department, so we've had a group of folks working to see how those cuts can be managed. We tried to look at the agency and the department

and see if there are core functions that were being performed and could those functions be consolidated or centralized for the department or are there things that can be pushed out to the field and handled locally. We looked at things like payment processing and our technical computer support. We had folks that were doing leasing and general services kinds of functions and personnel functions. So, we looked across the Department, and asked where do we have duplication and could we streamline that, as a result of budget reductions. That meant that there were about 90 people within the Department who were either subject to or will be subject to a layoff or whose function was moved to another part of the Department. Unfortunately, last week I had a conversation with about 12 folks within our agency, 6 of whose jobs had been eliminated and they will be subject to the layoff January 1, and another 6 whose job functions are being allocated to another part of the Department in order to centralize or pick up functions. As I said it wasn't anybody that was working under the Rehab Services program directly, but it impacts our whole agency and those are really hard discussions because we've done such a good job in trying to manage our resources and not have layoffs."

Denise said, "We have begun to have some legislative committee hearings. We had a hearing with our appropriation subcommittee in October. That was really to lay out our strategic plan for the Department. We are finalizing the strategic plan, we still have a couple of things we're tweaking. We will get that out to you all once that is completed. I believe the goal is to have it out on our website so that you can access it that way. We will let you know when that's finalized and where you can access it. If we need to get it to you in a different format, we can do that as well. The plan is for the entire Department so the meeting that we had in October with the subcommittee talked about our performance measures and about the goals and the critical areas that we need to be watching at the Department and at the Division levels. Of course our goals were around increasing employment for individuals, actually focusing on youth who are transitioning, making sure they aren't falling through the gaps. Really the two major ones are employment and youth targeting, if they are in transition. We'll get those to you and share that with you as well. At the first part of December we'll be in front of the appropriation committee again. We'll be there with Mental Health and Health and Senior Services, three Departments coming together to talk about common services or common client groups that we serve so that people can get a sense of our scope and we will be talking about where there are gaps in the services or if there's duplication. Then we will be in front of Representative Bearden who is the Chair of the House Budget Committee, the first part of December to talk about zero-based budgeting. So, that's really where we begin, the first kind of discussion about how our budgeting works, what programs we support by that, what services we support by our budget. We used to have a legislative session that ran from January to May and now we have one that runs year-round. It's good because it's giving us time to talk with folks and help them understand our business and what we do, but it's pretty time consuming and folks are working hard to keep up with all of the requests."

Lew said that he didn't want to unleash a monster, "But when you said zero-based budgeting are you meaning they will start again from nothing and build the budget for each department each year?" Denise said that they are trying to clarify what the request

is. "There has been lots of discussion from the budget chair about really understanding how the budgets are built and what those budgets are used for. It really is going in starting at that beginning until we can say these are the programs that we operate, this is the staff that we employ, and these are the dollars that we spend so really it's starting from the ground up, yes. That's not to say that our appropriation part is zero and we go from there, but it really is designed for them to understand how the budget supports our operation and the programs that we run. This is new to us as departments and as agencies. It's not just Social Services, it's across the board; every department is going through similar exercises and having similar discussions. I do think it's an effort to look at areas for reductions.

Russ said that it use to be that all the departments presented basically their core requirements, which was the same starting core and then requested "add-ons. There is a feeling among the legislators that they need to understand the programs and how the budget is built to get to those core numbers. Always before it was just presenting core numbers and what funds cover what programs and then you move forward. Now, it's really telling how we build up to that those core numbers. Lew said so they asked some very hard questions then. Denise said "Yes, that's right. There have been a lot of activities and questions. I really think this is in part because we have a lot of new legislators. They don't know about our business and the folks that we serve. So, I hope that it will be a good learning opportunity for them and an opportunity for us to share in a way that we aren't always able to when they get here in January and there's to many competing in priorities. I think it could be a good process for us.

Russ told Denise that he thinks Council members all realize the importance of going through the Division and the Department and that the Council would like to be helpful in any way possible as she and her staff working with the legislative group. He indicated that there is an ad hoc group that was just appointed that we be looking at where some of the vacancies are and also looking at the channels by which we can come up with some new providers.

Russ said, "I know that there has been some times when there are public comment on various department budgets and so forth, and the council would like to be of help at those hearings."

Denise said she thinks we have. She said, "We're working on our budget request so we can't tell you today if this is what the budget looks like because we're not there yet. I do think that what we can do is to let you know about when the hearing process begins because they will have public testimony, and actually I think there is some desire to have public testimony in those first weeks of December. We can certainly get those dates to you. Mike is our legislative liaison too so he can at least make you aware of those opportunities, if you would like to come, or provide written testimony, that's always welcomed by the committees. I don't expect that we will be doing a traditional budget presentation but there will be conversations about our budget, and I think there was some thinking about having comment times during that week. So we'll find out about that and then certainly as we move into January and session officially convenes, we can keep you

posted as we're coming up on budget presentation and as public comment time is being allowed for Social Service related issues.

Mike said that there is nothing that would exclude the Council from advocating at the Capitol. Denise said not at all. She said, "I think that what I would hope is that we could get information to you about where we are at from a budget perspective so that we're all on the same page. Certainly this is a conversation that you can have more easily than we can, at least we're not at odds and that we all know what's being presented.

Russ said that the important part of this is that we have a consistent, solid message, whatever avenue we decide to take. Denise said, "We'll get those dates out to you and I know you all keep track of that as well, but we'll try to let you know about key dates that are coming up or events so if you want to take advantage of that, you can." Mike asked that the Council understand that sometimes they reschedule things, and that he might send the Council an email or give a call on a Thursday for a Friday meeting.

Russ asked if there were comments on any of the financial materials provided at the Council meeting. Denise said, "Let me walk you through and just kind of tell you what you have in front of you. Again this really captures what Brian Kincade, our Budget Director, said when he came to the last meeting and talked about Blind Pension Fund and how the revenues were being calculated. I tried to get that information to you, without being too technical. On the projected FY04 Growth in Fund Balance, we are projecting an ending balance this year of about 13 million dollars. That is with, we expected, some caseload growth this year and there was also a rate increase this year. The fund balance is still pretty healthy. There is a page that talks about FY2004 appropriated Blind Pension Funds that just shows how those funds were being appropriated. There was a switch last year to use the fund for some services and supports. There was a sheet called Blind Pension Fund 0621 and that was just the history of the revenues and the expenditures. I think some folks were interested in how did we get here and so really this is to show the history since State Fiscal Year 1993 to projected '04 as to the revenues, expenditures and the fund balance.

Lew asked where the money comes from. Denise said it comes from the property tax. John said that he was concerned about them trying to sweep the Blind Pension Fund out. Denise said that she understands that. He said that we have fought that for years and we're still continuing to fight it. Russ said that this legislative session would be critical because last year they did sweep certain funds. Russ said, "That's where we as a Council need to be diligent with you keeping us informed and we trying to provide any assistance that we might have in that particular area." Denise said that, "The sweep could occur. There is nothing, as far as I know, in the legislation that would prevent them from sweeping. It really is a matter of trying to articulate the need for the dollars. We will have a caseload growth decision item for '05 indicating that we're projecting an additional caseload growth and a grant increase. Those are things we put together every year as long as the fund balance is there, so that's part of it. We'll have that requirement going into '05."

Lew asked how many people will be receiving the Blind Pension? Denise said that the average monthly number is about 500.

Lew also asked if the state has a unit or does the Department have a person who goes through every possible grant available. Denise indicating that the Department actually has folks that work on nothing but claiming and drawing down federal dollars, making sure that we're maximizing those dollars as well as other targeted funds, like the Blind Pension fund. It is in Brian Kincade's shop and they do a great job at that. Russ added that also each of the state agencies have people who know what is coming down through the Federal Register. He reminded Council members that many times these federal grants require some type of state match.

Lew said that what he was use to is when the state could not match federal dollars they would look, especially on the so called establishment grants, and they would allow not-for-profit agencies to make the match and draw the money down. That's just something that he would like to see go on, if that's at all possible. Stan asked if the federal grants are tightening up. Denise said that she didn't think that they are. She thinks that what we're seeing on the federal level is the tendency to block grant, which typically doesn't mean increased funding. Many times they are targeted dollars, so you really have to kind of create or have something that fits that special need.

Denise also mentioned that one of the performance indicators that we are talking about are people going to work. That's one of the aims of RSB of course. Lew said that Denise made a very important point that the Council should know -- that more and more state, county and federal dollars will be allocated based on performance. Lew said, "I think everybody ought to know that, there is no more just giving people a pot of money." John said that he doesn't think that's bad policy, if he were giving away money he would want some measures in place to see that it was used properly.

James Pelfrey said, "One of the things that was discussed when Mr. Kincade was here was the consistency of the Blind Pension and how it was administered from county to county. We as a council were advocating for and hoping that that process would be tightened up." Denise indicated that the staff could bring in a few people and have a look at this. "If we want to make recommendations around process or policy changes, maybe we could get a couple folks to write down some ideas and get some recommendations and bring them back to the Council." Russ asked if the Council would want to do this and members said yes.

Stan said he thinks it would be great, but we've tried this. "This is probably Council business, but you get a committee of this magnitude and conference calls do not work. We do not have the money to come in here and meet and that's going to be a problem. I don't know how you handle feedback and consistency, without having meetings and money, and you can't do that on conference calls. Our committee just hasn't worked out with conference calls."

Denise said that if we have a small group or subcommittee she thought we could look at bringing folks in at least, and then we could get it out to the rest for a response.

Russ said to Denise that since she indicated that we might be able to bring a couple of folks in that might help with Stan's concerns. Russ suggested that the Council come up with a list of a couple folks that could come in and maybe sit down and discuss the matter with Mike and Denise and then communicate back to our whole Council. Denise said, "Then what we could do is look at what we see as key trends or factors and analyze the information a little bit more, and then whoever is interested in that can react to that and then we could put some recommendations around the information."

Denise indicated that income eligibility was the other piece to follow up on from last time she was here. She indicated, "I don't know that we can change income eligibility or those kind of things, at least this year, but it might be something we want to work towards, but at least lets figure out what's happening with the levels that we have set now." John said that he thinks each office staff just interprets it themselves and that the local staff really understand them. Denise said that she thinks that's true, especially if they don't have a lot of experience.

Stan asked about the liaison position and where we were with developing that contract. Denise said that she recognizes that she owes the Council that contract. She said, "I've got my folks looking at the liaison contract language. There are a couple of us that met on that and it just kind of got delayed because of other priorities we are working on. I haven't forgotten that one."

ANNUAL REPORT

Debbi asked about the Annual Report and how it was to be put together. Russ said that he would like to do that with Denise being present so that we could have consistency in our message and to make sure that we are on the same page.

Debbie said that Jim, Ruby and she had done lots of emailing back and forth. She said, "What we had requested and what we had received was information over the annual report for several years. As I dug through my information, I actually had annual reports starting in 1999 and going through the year 2002 so I had a nice variety of annual reports to look over and gather information on what we have done in the past, what we need to continue doing, and what's working well and not working. I had a difficult time finding anything in writing that says this is what an annual report must consist of. I was looking for that and I sure didn't find it. I know I emailed Ruby, Jim, John Ford, Sheila, and Kim, just trying to find that information. I decided that since I didn't get a lot of information I would go through five years of annual reports and pull together what looked consistent and provided good information on what we are doing for the state of Missouri and to prove that we are spending state money wisely. I feel like that should be the outcome of the annual report; what are we doing, how are we spend the money, how we are justifying it, what progress we are making, and where we are not making progress.

Obviously, I think we need to look at problem areas too. So, this is kind of what I've compiled as a list of topics, that probably needs to be discussed. I am definitely open to suggestions.

Debbi outlined the proposed contents of the annual report. She said, "I feel it's very critical that a message from the chairperson needs to exist yearly, as to what we as a council have accomplished during the course of the year. There needs to be a current membership list, a table of contents, a description of services under the vocational rehabilitation program and the clients that we're serving. There needs to be something regarding the eligibility statement for voc rehab services, new referrals on a yearly basis and this needs to be broken down by gender and race. We need to talk about closures. From my understanding, as I look through annual reports, we have Status 8, Status 28, Status 30 and Status 26 closures. We have lots of different types of closures that mean something and we have statistics tied to these closures that we need to report on, because my interpretation of a closure is that it's probably a success story. However, certain ones of these closures are success stories, and certain ones aren't success stories and we need to discuss why they aren't success stories. I think it's important to do an average cost per client of services. Information regarding access to various RSB services would be nice to include in the annual report and I think that for members here that are new, that would be a nice summary of what all RSB offers.

James Pelfrey was concerned that last year we did not submit the annual report until May. He said, "Part of our past discussion was to not get ourselves in the same situation in the future. I think that's a concern that we all have, that we're scrambling and we're going to do one of two things. One, have an incomplete report, or two, that it be not timely and both of those things happened and we seem to be back at the same point which is kind of the same theme we talked about earlier. What I don't want is a report that goes in that's full of fluff. I want hard-core statistics. I want proof that we are doing a great job in the state of Missouri, and I want proof that if we're not meeting the needs, that changes are being discussed."

Stan asked if it was during last year that we talked about this, and brought in two or three reports from other states and we mentioned how it was a PR tool and further talked about how slick we need to make this. Stan said, "I kind of agree with Debbie, it has to be readable and it has to be presented in a nice fashion, but I think it ought to have more hard facts than slick presentation."

Denise said she would like to be able to say we've got people engaged at the level they should be engaged at and that they are making progress. She said, "I don't want to have to wait until the end of the year to see how many closures that we have. I know that there are good things and activities happening all along the way and we should be able to demonstrate that as well."

Ruby asked, "What standards and indicators were we going to use to measure whether or not they have been met and to include them in the annual report. That's something that we might need to look at."

Denise said that we might need to look at that. She said that the kinds information that we're talking about here would only enhance an annual report and really a reporting of the work that's going on.

Russ said that we've struggled the last three years on what to include.

Debbi said that she thinks it's time to put it in writing. She also asked about including client surveys.

Denise said that she also thought that we had staff designated to do those surveys.

Russ said that the Council would look forward to hearing more on that. He asked the Council to go back over the outline prepared by Debbi and then and asked if there were any additions or deletions to the subcommittees work?

Josh said that he would be interested in seeing a break down of grievances or fair hearings and the outcomes of the fair hearings on an office-by-office break down in the annual report. Josh said, "I think that will strongly reflect the level of services that people are receiving through out the state and I don't think it's going to be a very big number." Debbie said that she was not aware of any that have been brought to our attention as a Council last year, and that was something that we were supposed to be kept aware of. John said that might be a good thing and then if we had none and it was blank that would look even better.

Russ asked if there were any other additions to the outline that Debbi has proposed? Russ asked, "Denise, I don't want to put you on the spot, but are you comfortable with the type of information being included in the annual report and would that be useful for the Division as well as for RSB." Denise said she thought it would be fine. She said, "We will need to look and see what information we have available now and start pulling that together, if you will get us a data list."

Stan asked if she would verify the information that we put in the report. Denise said yes and indicated that if there were some holes because of the computer conversions, she will let the Council know. Debbie said that it's November and we don't have the next council meeting until February and it's due by March.

Russ said since we were a little late the last time we could still adopt the annual report at our February meeting.

Debbie will work with Mike on getting the data. Then, Russ will work with Debbie and Mike and Denise on an avenue by which we can get information to the Council and determine a way that we can get some type of closure on adopting the report.

John said that he thinks it would be good if we set up some guidelines for future reports as we go. James Pelfrey said hopefully this would be it and that we are not reinventing it again every year.

Russ commended Debbie and the subcommittee for all of their work, especially Debbie for the outline of contents. He asked Mike to begin getting the numbers crunched. Russ also told Debbie that she may need assistance from staff in this area and commented that this will be an importance role for a liaison if we can move in that direction on the contract language.

PUBLIC FORUMS

Russ said he would like to talk with Denise about the concerns of the Council regarding public forums because we have a number of people out in the field that would like to have some kind of public hearing or public forum. He indicated that we needed to talk about either funding for public forums or what the limitations might be in not having them.

Stan said that was some of what the Council talked about at the meeting before. We know that the financial restraints may be there. Stan said, "Several down at home have voiced the opinion that we're really not serving that requirement and what we've been advocated to do, going to the public." John said that the older blind do hold forums throughout the state. John said that what Stan was referring to on the forums was the act that created the Council which says that it will hold the public forums. Denise asked if the Council had talked about doing this in conjunction with some of Council meetings or other having other meetings as well. She asked for clarification. Russ said that at that time we were able to have meetings around the state.

Russ asked, "Do you have any thoughts given the financial constraints of the state and the fact that we have had meetings of the Council around the state and I realize that we tried to pull those closer in, will there be any funds available to eventually have some hearings and forums around the state so that our clients can make concerns noted to the Council that we in turn can relay to RSB. I don't mean to be putting you on the spot."

Denise said, "No you're not, I think that when we were trying to build the budget around the liaison, one of the things we tried to add in was the ability for some public forums and hearings. We tried to put a dollar amount on that to support, so I am fine with that approach. I guess I need a little bit of help on what the purpose of this public forum is and how to do it. I'm not quite sure of what really you are trying to accomplish."

Stan said that as the Council they would meet around the State and that evening we would have sometimes 20 grievances from the public in that area. Stan said, "They would come in and we would say okay that's fine we'll write that down because that's all we can do, but this would be, and it says right there in our by-laws that we will do this around the state."

Denise asked, "Was it a purpose for the consumer, was the experience always consumer complaints?"

Russ said, "No, that it wasn't necessarily grievances; comments were both positive as well point to gaps in services.

Sheila Wright said, "For many years every comment made at the public forums went into annual report, and I don't know that needs to happen when you have them throughout the state. But, when we only had one in Kansas City and Tory and Ruby were the only Council members present, they were the only ones that got to hear what went on there. At least those comments should have been typed up and shared with the Council."

James Pelfrey said that he wanted to pick up on a few of the comments. He said, "One, I think we didn't know until we were basically told, we're meeting in Jefferson City and I went hey we've scheduled our meetings around the state. I guess I saw the primary purpose of the Council was to be visible and be in the different areas of the state so that we could hear from the consumers. Maybe we wouldn't have to do the consumer survey every year if we were going to be at the forums. I think the way that it's done now there really isn't the publicity where you are going to have people know that there is a Rehab Council meeting and that we have these forums."

Mike asked if it could be that we do the public forums regionally and those members from the Council in the area go and representatives from Jeff City also go to the public forums. Mike said, "We could gather the information, via note takers, answer questions, listen to what the folks have to say, do that statewide, and then bring that all into one survey, or bring all that forward to the Council. That way everybody wouldn't have to travel. I know that some of you mentioned there is a concern, I think Sheila did, that only a few people were able to hear those things, if there is someone from our agency there that is documenting that information to share it with the rest of the council and we do it all around four or five areas of the state, then wouldn't that serve the same purpose with a limited travel schedule.

John asked, "Would this save any money? I don't think having them separate from the council meetings would save any money."

Stan said, "The only reason that I would go to someone to talk with me is because I'm not involved with the grievance process; they've already got that in tact. Really if they come to us at one of these forums, they are wanting to talk to someone else, to say I'm not getting any results with my problem. That would be the only reason they would talk to us, so then in turn we could say to you people, we're hearing in this section of the State we had 30 complaints that weren't being addressed."

Denise said that her concern is that there's no mechanism to really document that information and have a way to get back to people and have an opportunity to respond, She said, "I don't want folks just coming and saying things and then we never get back to them."

Lew stated, "I want to maybe help balance it and you can turn this around and invite the service providers to come and share with you their experiences, it would help us do a better job. You could also invite civic organizations like the Lions Club with its primary goal being vision. The Lions Club ought to be invited to come and make a presentation. You can turn this forum into, them telling you, the advocates for visually impaired individuals, what needs to be done in their communities as opposed to them just coming to complain about what's not being done. I think that could be very positive because we're looking for support out in the field. Well, what greater group to go through then to touch every community that has a Lions Club and ask them to send a representative and they can go back and report to their individual groups. The Council could work with the positive aspect of that and then I think we could mitigate some of the, 'well I had a bad experience' like I didn't get my pension, because you could say why didn't it happen. Maybe you could turn that into something that could give us grass roots support out there to talk with the representative and senators from the communities and say hey listen this is what's happening out here. If it comes from a Lions Club member who knows the legislator from his district on a first name basis, it might be a little bit better than them just calling you because they got a complaint from somebody."

Ruby said that she finds that for the most part there are a few outspoken people who will say something at a public forum but most of people will not say anything publicly, they want to speak with someone either one on one or through their consumer satisfaction survey or might not even complain at all because they feel they might not get anything else. She indicated that there is a lot of dissatisfaction in the community but it is hard to have consumers make a complaint or put in a grievance.

Russ asked if the Council members had any other questions or comments for Denise. Bill Burris said there are some really positive aspects about Denise being present at the meeting. Bill said, "It's a great opportunity to talk with our main spokesperson with the department and Denise we do appreciate your work on it and I know you had a big job of making the transfer here with the governor's executive order, so just now that we appreciate it."

James said, "We know Mike is going to be the interim deputy director, do you have any comments on where we are with the position or are there any other updates?" Denise said "No, give me a little bit of time. I do appreciate your work though and I look forward to us working with you."

Ruby said "Denise, Mike said that you were going to fill the Deputy Director's position fairly soon? Were you thinking of going internally or locally to fill the position and not a nationwide search like you did the last time. Denise said, "Right now I am considering all the options. I have confidence in Mike to keep us moving forward while we are considering the options. I liked the process that we used last time, I thought it was a good process, but I feel pressed for time as well and I don't want us to lose ground and I feel like we are making some headway and I don't want us to lose ground."

Russ said that the Council did appreciate the chance to be involved in the process last time. John said he just wanted to mention the fact that we did go nation wide and we still ended up getting somebody awful close. Denise responded that that was a good point.

Denise left the meeting at this time. She thanks the Council members for their help.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Russ said, "We've kind of jumped around on our schedule, but we've finished with the Director's report and the Deputy Director's report and we've dealt with one committee report and that's the annual report." He then asked if there were any other committee reports that needed to come to the attention of the Council.

Russ indicated that Lawrence Luck was chairing the committee on the development of a Resource Plan. He asked if there were committee members that wished to update the council. John indicated that there was nothing to present at this time since the last conference call. John said, ""We didn't all agree, but Lawrence is working with RSB on a contract and I believe we are going to leave it that way, aren't we, to try to get the contract worked up and my only feeling on it was we didn't have any solid figures on what it costs to do it. So we are still working, and there is nothing that we can report."

Mike said, "One of the steps that it's at right now is for the budget folks to put numbers to it, solid numbers and then also I think a piece that was missing, I shouldn't say that because it was pieces that were missing from everything that I've looked at that and all that I've been able to find was a job description so to speak. Maybe the committee has done that and Denise has it."

John said, "It's just the financial part of what is coming because like I said it's awful hard for us to work when we don't know what they were paying total out per the liaison that we had to start with.

Russ said that he thinks the key component with the committees' work was that we wished to have a liaison who could move the council's work forward as opposed to where we were having various people doing all kinds of small responsibilities and coming to the council with their reports. The Council didn't feel like it had a good liaison. Russ said that he thought that was being addressed in the contract language.

James said, "I was just going to say and I know at the last meeting, one of the things that Dr. Davidson had said was that she was very committed to having an outside person who wants to work with the Council, and I hope that that momentum that has been started doesn't stop. I know the contract has a commitment to having this person in place and once that is worked out, then we can recognize that there is a need because this has been a strong bone of contention. I think we all left the last meeting feeling positive that this would get done and we would find a person that we are comfortable with and I think we really appreciate the work that Lawrence has done and hope that keeps moving forward.

Russ asked for other committee reports.

Tory Brust said, "I just have a question about committees, I was thinking that at the last meeting we went through and reviewed what committees we had and who was on what. I looked through my minutes and I can't find it, I wonder if we could do that again or find it again."

Ruby said that she thinks it's time for our new chair to make new committees since we have new people. Stan said that it needs to be done and a copy sent to council members.

Russ said that what he will do if it's acceptable to the council is get emails out to members listing the committees that we have had in the past and asking if there are preferences that one would like to be on. Then within a short time frame we will then come back out with emails that will be assigning committees and chairs of each of the committees.

James Pelfrey asked, "Were we going to start from the ground up or list the people that were maybe on committees. Like those of us who are here, if we are on a committee like the annual report committee, that one we probably want to keep going as is."

Russ said that he thinks that was what Ruby was meaning, that we continue the current committees including Debbie's committee working with the annual report and then add on a couple of areas. Russ said, "Denise mentioned a couple of areas. Let me review those and I will ask Mike to determine if there is any other advisory groups that he and Denise would like to have the council work with."

Russ asked if there was other new business. The next meeting will be in February the second Friday of February 13, 2004.

Russ asked if there were any topics that people would like on the agenda.

James Pelfrey said, "The future guidelines for the annual report, and the liaison contract and we would hope that by that time, the contract would have gone through OA and that we might even be able to have an announcement of the liaison."

Russ said that one of the things that he would like to do is get a draft agenda, with input from RSB, out to members and then let council members add to the agenda and then get agenda materials out before the meeting rather than getting them at the meeting. Russ said, "I think it's important to have the materials to review. I make that commitment that we will be doing that. We look forward to being part of a new group, a new location and Mike I think we all feel very comfortable working with you and I think it's been really important for you to be Interim, since you have been the liaison with the legislature and I think that will be an important plus for us. Quite frankly I always felt when I was involved with DESE that the blind community was left out. I feel really good about having the direct conversations with you."

Debbi asked if she missed the part of where do we go now with the annual report. She said, "I know Mike and I are going to get together with all the suggestion and I'll get that to you by this weekend, but as a council how are we going to get information back to our council because the annual report is due before our next meeting. It's due at the end of December.

James Pelfrey asked if there was any way that it could be emailed to the Council members? Mike asked if this would work, "I travel a lot and for those folks that the email works for that's great, we'll email it to you, for those that it doesn't I can get whatever format you need.

Russ would like to work with Mike and Denise's office in making sure that once we have something in writing we get it out to the Council, and then have a formal adoption, probably through a conference call, then an in-person adoption, even though we have to have it in before that meeting. Russ asked Mike to make contact with the regional secretary's office and determine what are the final procedures on the report. "I know we have the law that says it has to be in by an established time. Debbi I think you have been in contact with them about the report and you've talked to them a little bit about content, but I would like to know if there has there been any other changes from the regional secretaries office on the content." Mike asked if Debbi and he could do a conference call with them and talk to them at the same time.

Russ said maybe it would be good to send them the outline, adding the two or three things we discussed at the meeting. Russ said, "Debbi, that would be important, especially since we were so late last time. I would like for them to know that we are moving through it right now."

DISTRICT SUPERVISOR INTERVIEWS

Mike said he had asked Denise when she got to the meeting about the interviews for the St. Louis North District Supervisor's position and she was fine with a representative from the council being in on the interviews. Russ asked if the council had a pleasure on that, and said, "We did kind of have a volunteer. With the council's acceptance, I would like to ask that Debbi to serve as our council's representative on the interview for the St. Louis North Supervisor position." Jim Sucharski volunteered to sit on the interviews if Debbi's schedule didn't allow her to attend. Jim said he had another suggestion, he would like for that person to be familiar with the Missouri School for the Blind and suggested that the interviews be conducted at the school. He said, "I think that if you can hire somebody in that area, they ought to know that there are a lot of their children right there at the Missouri School for the Blind."

Debbie asked if that was their primary office that they dealt with. Jim said, "No, we deal with all of them but they are right there and I have 100 kids and about 60 of them are transported in daily from that region. I'm just suggesting that if you want that as an option." Russ asked Mike to please relay that to Denise.

Stan asked that with reference to our past chairman, John Ford, if it were customary to give him the gavel or at least send him an appreciation note from the council for his time involved?

Jim Pelfrey said that Council has had plaques done before. Russ asked Mike to check with his staff on the procedures and then determine a way to make a presentation to John Ford.

Russ said that the travel vouchers were available and asked Kim to give quick instructions on how to complete them. Kim said that pretty much all council members have to do was to check the social security number and that everything else should have been completed except for a person's mileage and if they had any breakfast costs.

Mike said indicated that he was out of the office the next week due to a prior commitment but that he would be checking e-mails and that he would respond to email.

Meeting was adjourned.